

United States Senate

February 1, 2023

Dr. Charles Barber
Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer
National Science Foundation
2415 Eisenhower Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Dr. Barber,

Congratulations on your appointment as the first Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer of the National Science Foundation (NSF), a new role created by the *CHIPS and Science Act*. As you work to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion at NSF and in the science community in general, we urge you to revise NSF surveys to adopt voluntary gender identity and sexual orientation questions on its national workforce surveys. Without this key data, NSF will struggle to accurately assess the needs of the LGBTQI+ scientific workforce.

Research into the LGBTQI+ population in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) is sparse, but estimates from workforce surveys suggest that LGBTQI+ people are underrepresented in STEM by approximately 20 percent. A 2014 study suggested that this gap is not caused by a lack of interested individuals but from a higher proportion of LGBTQI+ students who leave STEM academic pathways compared to their straight and cisgender counterparts. The reasons for this are unsurprising: LGBTQI+ scientists consistently and systematically report more negative workplace experiences than their colleagues. The first step to addressing these shortfalls is collecting quality data on the LGBTQI+ population in STEM fields by adding voluntary questions about sexual orientation and gender identity to NSF's workforce surveys, as well as adopting robust privacy and confidentiality standards to ensure the data are adequately protected.

As you know, NSF conducts surveys of advanced STEM degree holders, including the Survey of Earned Doctorates and the National Survey of College Graduates. Although NSF committed to pilot testing questions on sexual orientation and gender identity in 2018, these questions have not been formally added to the surveys and, disappointingly, NSF abandoned the collection of sexual orientation data in favor of a more limited gender identity question design in December. The survey data provided by these questions is critical to implementing federal policy, including competitive awards in the *CHIPS and Science Act* to increase the participation of underrepresented communities in STEM studies and careers. Further, including questions on these topics is consistent with the directives in Section 11 of Executive Order 14075 to measure and address the disparities faced by LGBTQI+ individuals, as well as Executive Order 13985 to advance equity for underserved communities, including LGBTQI+ communities.

You have an opportunity as the first Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer at NSF to lay the groundwork for a more equitable future in STEM, and we urge you to include questions on both sexual orientation and gender identity in NSF's workforce surveys.

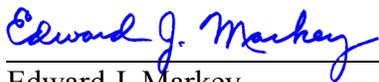
Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



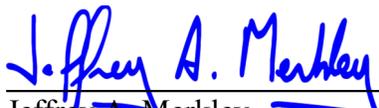
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United States Senator



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United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
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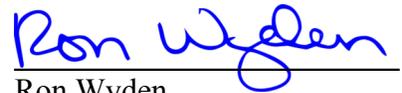
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